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LITTLE BLUE BIRD

The Girl Missionary



LITTLE BLUEBIRD

THE GIRL MISSIONARY

BY

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LITTLE BLUEBIRD.



CHAPTER I.

AT SOUTHPORT.

THE Nortons of Hollybush had gone to the pleasant sea-side town of Southport to spend the months of July and August 1874, and were staying in a pretty villa that faced the beach.

A family of four sisters, the Misses Butler of Blackburn, had taken up their summer quarters in the next house. One of these ladies, Miss Fanny, was lame, and not at all strong. She could with difficulty walk a very short distance, leaning heavily on the arm of one of her sisters ; while another carried

a camp stool, on which she might rest as she knitted or read by the sea-shore.

There was a low iron railing between the front plots of the two houses, and as Miss Fanny sat on the garden chair, which stood near her front door, she saw on the lawn, just over the railing, a blithe girl of nearly eleven years of age skipping about like a little fairy.

This girl was Edith Norton. In the afternoon she wore a light-blue dress with a great many white buttons on it, so many that, had she been a boy, some folks would have been apt to call her 'little Buttons;' but as she had also on a blue sunshade bonnet, as well as blue shoes, when Miss Fanny first saw her, the name 'Bluebird' came into her head, and a very suitable name it proved to be, for it pleased all Edith's friends.

As Miss Fanny was knitting out of doors on the afternoon of the second day of her stay at Southport, the ball of worsted rolled off her lap and got caught among the thorns of a rose-bush that grew by the side of the little lawn. As soon as Edith, who was playing in front of her own house, observed this, she

darted out at her gate, in through Miss Butler's, picked up the runaway ball, and handed it to Miss Fanny so quickly, and with such a happy, beaming face, that Miss Fanny drew her closely to her side, and said, 'You dear child! you kind, sweet, little "Bluebird!" Do give me a kiss.'

Edith did this so heartily, and looked so pleased, that Miss Fanny drew her still closer to her side, and called her 'a dear, dear child; a merry little "Bluebird,"' and kissed her again and again. The two had a long talk together—so long that the nurse, wondering where Edith was, had set off to look for her, and was surprised to find her chatting away with the stranger lady next door.

'Edith, dear,' said nurse, 'whatever are you doing, bothering the lady?' Then, looking towards Miss Fanny, she added, 'I beg pardon, Miss, I'm afraid Miss Edith has been bothering—'

But Miss Fanny quickly stopped the nurse by saying, 'Bothering? not at all. Don't say a single word against my dear little Bluebird, she has been so kind. My ball of worsted got caught in a rose-bush, and she ran and brought it to me, just like a

little fairy. I'm sure we'll be great friends. Won't we, my darling Bluebird ?'

As she said this she put her arm round Edith's shoulders, and pressed her to her side. The pale face of the invalid grew brighter as she did so, although the healthy look of the child made Miss Fanny's thin cheeks appear still more careworn.

'You'll sometimes hop in to see me,' said Miss Fanny, 'won't you, my little Bluebird ?'

'Oh yes,' said Edith, 'if mamma and nurse will let me.' And she darted off with a laughing face past the nurse, who was greatly pleased with the new name that she had now got for Edith, and kept repeating to herself, 'little Bluebird, little Bluebird.' Mamma liked the new name too, and when papa heard the story he was delighted. He felt as if it made his girl dearer to him than ever, for he kept calling her his 'little Bluebird ;' sometimes he put another pretty word to it, such as 'darling,' or 'singing,' and when she came to bid him good-night he put a whole string of names together, something like 'His own sweet, darling, singing, pretty little Bluebird.'

Edith was their only child ; she once had a brother called 'little Tommie,' but she hardly remembered anything about him ; he was two years older than Edith, but he had taken a sore throat, called diphtheria, and he died when she was only four years old.

The thing that she remembered best about Tommie was, that when he died, nurse took her blue dress away and put on a black one ; and that she had nothing on but black dresses for a long, long time. When she asked her mamma to let her wear her blue dress again, mamma used to cry, and say that the black dress was to show that she was sorry that they had lost little Tommie ; and when Edith said, 'If papa will bring back little Tommie, I'll put on my blue dress to play with him,' her mamma only cried the more.

When Mr. Norton came down by the afternoon train from Preston, where their home was, he allowed his servants or the railway porters to carry the hampers of nice things that Hollybush provided for the sea-bathers at Southport, but there was one little basket which he always carried himself. Inside of it were generally a bouquet, or cut flowers, and often

grapes or other nice fruit. This never left his hand until Bluebird met him at the end of the terrace in which their house was. She walked with him to Miss Butler's gate, skipped like a kid into their house, and left the basket, which made Miss Fanny happy, and Edith and, indeed, everybody in both houses happy, by these 'little deeds of kindness,' which were repaid with 'little words of love.'

Edith spent many a pleasant hour with Miss Fanny. They got on so well together, that when Mrs. Norton and the Misses Butler wished Edith to join them in a long walk, she often said she would rather play on the sands. For Miss Fanny was sitting there on her camp stool, and Edith liked to gather shells, and was not too big to make gardens and houses, and wells and castles and puddings, and even churches, of sand. The two became great friends; for always when Miss Fanny had a drive in the donkey carriages, that are so nice at Southport, little Bluebird was beside her, and both were happy.

Miss Fanny's health got slowly better during her stay at the sea-side; she could walk, first with less pain, then easily; she could also take more food,

and slept better ; and before she had been a month in Southport she felt very much stronger. She said, 'The doctor has done something for me ; the sea air has done much, but that dear little Bluebird has done most of all, for she has cheered me with her merry chirp, and has been God's angel of light and sweetness and love to me.'

Perhaps the thing that most firmly bound the two together was that Miss Fanny not only bore her illness gently and contentedly, but that her heavenly Father had added to the spirit of meekness with which He had blessed her, the spirit of love to all mankind for Christ's sake. Nothing delighted her more, or seemed so much to enable her to glory in afflictions, than to learn about the progress of Christ's kingdom in heathen lands.

Missionary news was her delight ; she loved to read about what was done for the heathen by all parts of the Christian Church in all parts of the world, until she seemed almost to hear living voices, as she repeated to herself,—

' From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand,

Where Afric's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand,
From many an ancient river,
From many a palmy plain,
They call us to deliver
Their land from error's chain.'

As Edith sat by her side on the sea-shore, Miss Fanny told her about what God had enabled the London Missionary Society to do, and the Moravian and the American, and a great many other missionary societies to do, until both hearts glowed with love; and as the waves broke at their feet, they almost spoke to the winds and the sea; certainly they wished they could make them do what Bishop Heber has taught the world so sweetly to sing,—

'Waft, waft, ye winds, His story,
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till, like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole;
Till o'er our ransomed nature
The Lamb, for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss returns to reign.'



CHAPTER II.

THE NEGRO TWINS.

DURING the last week of their stay at Southport, a missionary meeting was held in the chapel which the Misses Butler had attended. Amongst other attractions, Mr. Lovell, a missionary from Africa, was to take part in the meeting, and to bring with him two negro children which had been born twins, and that would have been killed on the day they were born if the missionary's wife had not saved their lives.

Miss Fanny and Edith drove to the meeting together, and as they arrived in good time, they got a seat in the centre of the chapel, from which they had a full view of the platform.

Edith was not old enough to understand all that was said by some of the speakers ; for they spoke of some hundreds of millions of people that had either no churches, or only a very few — not one church to ever so many thousands ; and of larger sums of money than she could count ; and of the Bible being printed in languages that she had never even heard of.

But when Mr. Lovell, the missionary from Africa, was telling about the kind of gods that the black men worshipped, gods made of wood and stone, and the cruelties and bloodshed that these gods were believed to love or to command, Edith was greatly shocked. He also told how cruel the heathen were to their wives, and even to one another, and that when a woman had twin babies they would turn the poor mother out into the woods to starve, or to be killed by the wild beasts, and either kill the babies or drown them, or even bury them alive. This made Edith feel very angry at the bad black men.

The missionary also said that his wife had gone every time she heard of twin babies being born, and tried to get the mother and the children brought to the mission-house. Some of those that she had thus

saved had now grown up to be boys and girls ; and he had brought a little black boy and a black girl to the meeting with him that would have been killed had it not been for the missionary's wife.

He went to the vestry to fetch the children, and came in leading the girl by the hand, and carrying the little boy on his arm. The moment the black children appeared,—their woolly, curly hair looked so funny, their white teeth and red lips sparkled so brightly on their black faces, and the white of the eyes of the little boy as they darted from side to side seemed so queer, that the meeting laughed loudly, and cheered noisily.

The little black boy was greatly frightened. He put his arms round Mr. Lovell's neck, buried his face on his shoulder, and looked up suddenly now and again. He also began to cry ; this made his teeth look whiter and his mouth look redder, and the white of his eyes dart about more quickly, which made the people laugh more and cheer louder. They were not laughing *at* the children, or mocking them, for their hearts were beating warmly for them, and they felt that they loved them. They just could

not help it ; even Miss Fanny was both laughing and crying. Mr. Lovell had to turn round with the black boy in his arms to let him be seen, and it was some time before he could get the twins to sit on the platform so as to allow him to proceed with his speech.

When he did so he was often interrupted by young people, and even old ones, standing up in their seats and stretching themselves in all directions to get a good look at the little negroes ; especially after they had got a little quieted and showed their curly black heads over the railing of the platform. This set the meeting laughing and cheering again, so loudly that Mr. Lovell stated he must really ask the little strangers to bid the meeting good-night, in order that he might get on with his speech.

The children were then held up and told to kiss their hands, and say good-night to the meeting. As they did so, many a hand on which a tear of love had fallen was kissed and waved to them in return. While the children were being taken out, a poor old woman almost jumped out of her seat, and tramped up the passage, shouting,—

‘Glory to God and the Lamb! Brands plucked from the burning! Glory to God and the Lamb!’ She also gave a shilling to both of the children, shaking the hand of each warmly, almost rudely.

She then turned to go to her seat, saying, ‘Glory to God and the Lamb! “Suffer the little children to come unto me.” Brands plucked from the burning! Glory to God and the Lamb!’ thumping the point of her large cotton umbrella on the passage of the church, while the meeting all the time cheered and laughed and kept repeating, ‘Glory to God and the Lamb!’ and some said, ‘Well done, Mary!’

This woman was a seller of shrimps in Southport, a poor, hard-working, pious woman, well known as ‘Shrimp Mary;’ but so few, excepting the regular attenders of the Wesleyan Chapel, had ever seen her with her Sunday bonnet on, that it was some time before they could believe their eyes. When they recognised her they almost misbehaved, for without at all intending to do anything that was not becoming in a church, some of the gentlemen could not help crying, ‘Three cheers for Mary!’ but nobody counted whether the meeting gave three

cheers or thirty; for the cheering lasted a long time.

The clergyman who was in the chair was scarcely heard when he said, 'Well done, Mary! you have done what you could; for, besides having the one thing needful which cannot be taken away from you, you have out of your poverty made a sacrifice with which God is well-pleased; and He dearly loveth a *cheerful giver*.'

Mary had by this time settled down in her usual corner, and Mr. Lovell at length got a little quietness to conclude his interesting address on Missions. Edith was so delighted, and her heart was so touched, that she said to Miss Fanny at the close of the meeting,—

'I *would* like to give the little black girl my necklace. May I, Miss Fanny?'

'You must first ask your mamma, my dear,' was the reply.

'Well, may I shake hands with old Mary and the two black children?' said Edith beseechingly.

'We'll see if we can get forward, but I'm afraid Mary will be away,' was the reply.

When they got outside a good many people were waiting to shake hands with the children, but Mary was not easily found. At length they saw her a little past the outer gate of the chapel helping an infirm old woman home. Mary's hands were full, one with her hymn-book and umbrella, the other with her aged neighbour, so Miss Edith merely said,—

‘When going round with your shrimps to-morrow, would you call them through Bellevue Terrace?’

‘Yees,’ said Mary. ‘Aw’ll coom, an’ blithely,’ as she moved off with her infirm friend.

Miss Fanny and Edith next went into the Mission Hall behind the church, where the black children had been taken. Edith had made up her mind to kiss them both, and was rushing forward to do so, when she stopped suddenly, stepped slowly back, and back, and back, until she got to the very wall of the Hall.

‘What’s the matter with you, dear?’ said Miss Fanny.

‘They’re awful black,’ said Edith; ‘I couldn’t kiss them; their hands are black too! Do they eat with such black hands?’

‘Yes, certainly ; but they are as clean as yours,’ was Miss Fanny’s reply.

‘I couldn’t kiss them—I really could not ; but I would like to shake hands with them and to touch the boy’s hair,’ said Edith.

‘Take off your glove then, and you will see whether their hands blacken yours or not.’

Edith took off her glove, went timidly forward, shrank back a little as the black girl came to meet her. At length she did shake hands with both, and felt the boy’s hair ; and thought it so soft and woolly and nice. When she looked at her hands they were quite clean ; but when another lady put a cake into the little black boy’s hand, and Edith saw him lift it to his mouth, she could not help saying, with something like a little scream, ‘I couldn’t eat anything’ out of such a hand. Why don’t they wash it white ?’

It was now time to go home,—indeed it was too late for both to be out ; so they drove off at once, resolving to have a long talk about the meeting and all kinds of missionary work some day soon.

Edith kept looking out all the next forenoon for

‘Shrimp Mary;’ and when she did appear with her basket of shrimps, she ran to tell Miss Fanny; and the two were at the front gate when Mary came forward.

‘Good morning, ladies!’ said Mary. ‘Any shrimps please, Miss?—fresh this morning, mum.’

Mary found two good customers that forenoon; for Mrs. Norton came out and bought some, as well as Miss Fanny.

When paying for them, Miss Fanny said timidly to Mary, ‘Would you excuse me asking you to take two shillings from me for the two you gave to the little black children last night?’

Mary had placed her basket on the footpath; she planted her arms firmly on her sides, lifted her weather-beaten face so that her old-fashioned, high-crowned straw bonnet looked like a flower-pot upside down, nearly falling off her head, and said, ‘Na, Miss; na, please, and thank’ee. I gave it to HIM (looking upwards), an to t’ little uns for His sake. I bean’t S’phira. I wouldn’t for t’ world take back part o’ th’ price; but if thaw likes, I’ll take t’ shillins to Brother Lovell for ’em, the dear little darkeys.

God bless 'em, an' you too, ladies! I bees a-goin' to see 'em off to Liv'pool in t' afternoon, I bees.'

'Mamma,' said Edith, 'may I go? and will you give me something to give them?'

'Gladly, darling,' said Mrs. Norton; and at the train, amongst others, seeing the negro twins off, were Mrs. Norton, Miss Fanny, Edith, and Shrimp Mary.

Into Mr. Lovell's hands a purse, wrought by Miss Fanny herself (for she had many little articles of this sort ready for a sudden call), was put by Edith as a present to the little Africans. It contained more than one piece of gold; and when Edith was showing it to Shrimp Mary, another shilling which she had intended to slip into the boy's hand was dropped into the purse, with a 'hush' sign from Mary, which Edith respected.

Edith had so far got over her mingled feelings of wonder and dislike at the colour of the children, that she stood holding one in each hand, and she actually kissed them several times. As they took their seats in the train, she gave the boy a packet of 'Ormskirk' gingerbread; and Mary handed the girl a pottle of her choicest shrimps.

Edith looked after the train, and kept waving her handkerchief long after it was out of sight; so did many others. Thus and there the rich and the poor met together, and they sweetly felt that the Lord was the maker of them all; for Edith shook hands warmly with Shrimp Mary, as also did Mrs. Norton and Miss Fanny; and they called her 'Sister Mary,' and spoke of her on their way home as 'a daughter of the King, and a helper in Christ Jesus.'





CHAPTER III.

THE MISSIONARIES IN THE BIBLE.

FOR the next few days the two friends saw little of each other, for papa 'stayed down,' and Aunt Lucy and Uncle Bolton were on a visit to the Nortons, and they were taken up with jauntings and picnics. Edith spoke a good deal about the twin negroes and the missionary meeting, but papa and uncle had so much to talk about, and so had Aunt Lucy and mamma, that Edith could not get them to enter upon that subject. Papa said,—

'Yes, my dear, that's all very nice. Missions are good things, very good things ; but they're more for Sunday, you know ; we will talk of them then. And

to-day we must all try to make Uncle and Aunt Bolton as happy as we can, that's good work too.'

After morning service and lunch, on Sabbath, Edith joined Miss Fanny on the sands. She took her Bible with her, and the first question she put was, 'Does the Bible say much about missionaries?'

Edith was rather surprised when Miss Fanny replied, 'It's all about missions and missionaries together.'

'Indeed!' said Edith. 'Do tell me all about them; just a great lot of things about them. But first, I would like to see the word missionary in my own Bible. Please find it for me.'

'But neither the *word* mission nor missionary are to be found in all the Bible,' said Miss Fanny.

'What!' said Edith. 'Is *missionary* not in all the Bible? I thought you said just now that it was all about missionaries together.'

'So it is,' said Miss Fanny; 'for missionary just means any one that is sent to do something, and mission the thing that he is sent to do. But now-a-days it is mostly used, at least in the churches, to mean any one who is sent to preach the gospel.'

If they are to preach to those who go to no church and do not care about their souls, in our own country, they are called Home Missionaries ; and those that are sent abroad to preach in heathen lands are called Foreign Missionaries.'

'Oh !' said Edith ; 'I understand now ! A missionary is a man sent to do good work, and who does it well.'

'You are right as to the first part, darling,' said Miss Fanny, 'and the last is true of all good missionaries ; but it is sometimes not easy to find out whether they do well or not ; for many good men work hard, and teach and preach and labour, for years without being able *to see* much of the good that they may have done, or many of the heathen becoming Christians.'

'Why,' said Edith, with a look of surprise, 'I'm sure that the God that Mr. Lovell tells them about is a far better God than their ugly painted, cruel idols of wood and stone ; and when he tells them that He was the God that made all the world and the sun and themselves, and that makes the corn to grow to feed them, and that He loves them, and that His

Son died for them, they'll love God and do whatever He tells them to do at once.'

'I wish very much,' said Miss Fanny, 'that that was the case, but it is difficult to get them to listen to God's message at all; they do not like new ways, and their bad habits are very ill to get quit of. Their heathen priests also try to keep them from hearing or believing what the missionaries say; and they have no Bible and no schools and no books, and it takes a long, long time to make them either care about or listen to, far less believe, God's word.'

'But why don't they try to get the children to come to school and learn about Jesus *before* they turn bad? Wouldn't that be the best plan?'

'Yes, dear, and they try that too, although you are hardly right in speaking about the children "before they turn bad;" for their homes are bad, and all that they see and learn is often bad; and the great enemy of souls tries to keep God out of their hearts; but a great many of the children who have attended the mission schools have already become teachers and preachers, and the Church has great hopes that these native preachers will do great things for Jesus.'

‘But please,’ said Edith, ‘tell me about the missionaries in the Bible, — what were their names, what did they do, and all that?’

‘I’ll do so with great pleasure,’ replied Miss Fanny. ‘Where shall we begin? For instance, Enoch was a missionary, for he preached and warned sinners before the flood.’

‘Was that the good man that never died,’ said Edith, ‘but God took him straight up to heaven?’

‘Yes.’

‘Why did God take him up? Was it because the people would not listen to him? or were they cruel to him?’

‘I cannot answer you that question; but after him came Noah,—he was a missionary.’

‘What! Noah that made Noah’s ark?’

‘Yes, he was a preacher of righteousness, and warned men that the flood would come and drown them all; but they did not believe him.’

‘But why did he not take them into the ark and preach to them there? Would they not go in till the flood was too deep for them to get in?’

‘Exactly,’ replied Miss Fanny; ‘but I must tell you about some little girl missionaries.’

‘Little girl missionaries!’ said Edith in astonishment. ‘Little girl missionaries! Oh, how nice! what about them?’

‘I’ll read you what they did, and you must try if you can act like them,’ said Miss Fanny, as she turned to the second chapter of Exodus, and read about Moses’s sister Miriam watching her baby brother, while he lay in the ark of bulrushes in the river. When she had finished, she said,—

‘Now that is the first girl we read much about in the history of the world, for she would not likely be above ten years old at the time; but she did the work she was sent to do well, for she watched her little brother and got the king’s daughter to take his mother to be his nurse.’

‘And did she always do missionary work after that?’ asked Edith.

‘We do not read very much about her; but we are told that eighty years after that, she was at the head of the women who sang the song of deliverance, when God dried up the Red Sea, brought His people safely

across it, and drowned their enemies, Pharaoh and his host, in its deep waters.'

'Oh! I remember now,' said Edith, 'I once learned the poem beginning with,—

“Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea,
Jehovah has triumphed, His people are free ;”

but what was the other girl missionary's name?'

'I cannot tell,' replied Miss Fanny. 'The Bible does not give her name, it only calls her "a little maid,"—see here's the story ;' and Miss Fanny read the fifth chapter of Second Kings, explaining it in a simple way while she read ; when this was finished, she said,—

'Now that's the other little missionary ; stolen from her dear home in Canaan, taken to Syria, made a servant or rather a slave to the wife of the great captain Naaman, that had fought against her own country ; perhaps it was Naaman himself that made her a slave. Very likely she did not know what the lady said when she spoke to her, for she would not know the language of Syria ; but she must have been a good, quick, honest, useful, God-fearing and

God-loving girl ; and must have done her work carefully and well, for her mistress believed her word when she said that there was a prophet in Israel that could make her master better ; and it showed great faith in the girl, for Elisha had never cured a leper before.'

'But, Miss Fanny,' said Edith in astonishment, 'did the great captain *really* go back to the land he had fought against, and stolen the little girl from, to see if the prophet would make him better? Did he not take the little girl with him to show him where the prophet stayed, and *give her back to her mother?*'

'He certainly went to the prophet's land,' replied Miss Fanny ; 'but he went to the king first, and the king did not know as much as the little girl did, for he could not think what to do with the great captain until the good prophet sent him a message to send Naaman to him.'

'Well, then,' said Edith, '*after* the captain was all better, why did he not send the little girl back to her mother?'

'I cannot tell why, or whether he did it or not,'

replied Miss Fanny ; ‘ perhaps she had more missionary work to do ; but at least you can learn from her story what a God-fearing girl can do, and has done. Wherever you go, my dear child, never forget to speak of the power of the “ Prophet that is in Israel,” for that is one of the names of Jesus.’

The two spent a pleasant and profitable Sabbath afternoon, for Miss Fanny showed her that the Bible was full of missionaries, old and young. The old one Edith thought she liked best was Anna, about whom Miss Fanny read in the second chapter of Luke. She was a very old woman ; and there was an old man called Simeon in the same chapter. When Jesus was brought to the temple as an infant, old Simeon, when he saw him, was quite satisfied and wished to die ; but old Anna had been a home missionary nearly all her life, and she knew all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem ; and as soon as she saw the infant Jesus, she not only gave thanks to God, but started off as quickly as her tottering old limbs and feeble strength could carry her, and spake of Jesus to all them that looked for Him—glad at heart to carry the ‘ glad tidings.’

What surprised Edith most of all was when Miss Fanny said,—

‘Indeed, darling, God had one only and well-beloved Son, and He made Him a missionary. Jesus Christ was *a*—was *the Great Missionary*.’

Edith was greatly solemnized on hearing this, and remained silent for some time. Miss Fanny allowed her to think for a short time, then continued: ‘He came to preach the gospel to the poor; to seek lost sheep; to do the will of Him that *sent* Him; to bring men to God. And His command to all that love Him is, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”’

‘But surely everybody cannot go?’ said Edith.

‘Quite true,’ replied Miss Fanny; ‘but everybody can help to send those who can go,—with their prayers, and with money to build churches and to provide Bibles.’ Miss Fanny then turned to the Third Epistle of John, and showed her that John had written to a Christian gentleman praising him for bringing ‘forward on their journey after a godly sort’ those ‘that for His name’s sake went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles,’ and telling us all

that 'we therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.'

As she finished reading this verse, Mr. and Mrs. Norton, and Uncle and Aunt Bolton, came out for a stroll on the beach. When Miss Fanny observed them, she said to Edith,—

'Yonder are papa and mamma, darling ; go and have a walk with them, and some other day we'll have another talk about the missionaries of the Bible.'

Edith thanked Miss Fanny prettily, and ran off to join her friends. Several times during their stay at the sea-side the two spent happy hours together, talking about the spread of God's kingdom in the heart, in the home, in Britain, and throughout the world. When the time came that the Nortons had to go to Hollybush, and the Butlers to Blackburn, Miss Fanny and Edith shed tears as they parted, and Mr. and Mrs. Norton pressed Miss Fanny to visit them at Preston ; and she begged that during the winter her 'Bluebird' should fly over to her, for at least a week, to cheer her home with her 'merry chirp.'



CHAPTER IV.

BLUEBIRD AT HOME.

MR. NORTON had been successful in business ; and Hollybush, which he had bought about three years before, was a beautiful house, with a large garden, greenhouses, and vinery ; indeed, the family had everything that money and good taste could supply.

The 4th of August was her father's birthday, and early that morning Edith roamed over the grounds, gathering as many sprigs of the lovely wild 'forget-mè-not' as she could find, with which she made a bouquet to form part of her birthday present to him. The other part was a Bible 'marker,' which her little fingers had sewed at Southport, under Miss Fanny

Butler's direction. It was of perforated cardboard, but all the sewing on it was 'her very own.' Often her fingers had ached over it, often had she to pick out parts on account of wrong stitches, but she finished it at last. The border was a light trellis-work of blue forget-me-nots; in the centre was a cross with a blue ribbon scroll round it, on which 'Forget-me-not' was sewed; and if sharp eyes had looked into it very carefully, they would have found 'E' neatly stitched in the heart of one flower, and 'N' in another.

An hour before her father's usual time of coming home, she had been at the window looking for him; more than once she had gone to the lodge gate, as if that would bring him sooner; and at last she stood on the front door step with a few sprigs of forget-me-not neatly tied together, which she wished to put in the buttonhole of his coat, for she had put the bouquet on the sideboard, to be presented along with the marker after tea.

She wore a white dress, but she had round her waist a wide blue sash, and her bonnet was trimmed with blue ribbons. The moment her father entered the avenue, she jumped down three of the front-door

steps at once, and bounded towards him not quite in a ladylike manner, laughing merrily when she saw him spread out his arms, and walk from side to side of the carriage drive as if to keep her from getting past. 'Here's a Bluebird flying away,' said he. 'Stop, Bluebirdie, stop!'

But she did not stop until she had seized his hand with both of hers, and said, 'Dear papa, many happy birthdays may you see!'

Then pulling him down a little, she put the forget-me-nots into his buttonhole, and, taking his hand, she swung his arm backwards and forwards until they reached the house; while her father kept saying, 'What a wild Bluebird you are, and what a strong wing you have to shake my arm that way!'

After tea Edith presented the bouquet and the marker to papa. Not even mamma had known of her having the marker; she was surprised when she saw it, and much more so when Edith said she had done all the sewing herself, and that Miss Fanny had showed her how to do it.

The work was so neatly done, the design and the motto so beautiful, and the bouquet of the real

forget-me-nots so trig and pretty, that both Mr. and Mrs. Norton felt a 'lump in the throat' and a swimming about the eyes when Edith told them that both were her 'very own doing,' as she again wished her papa many happy returns of his birthday.

He drew her to his side and kissed her warmly ; so did mamma. And papa had to be kissed again, and so had mamma ; and although both shed tears, they were tears of love and joy. Mr. Norton was thanking Edith, and examining the marker ; for he had found out the 'E,' and was seeking for the 'N,' when the servant opened the door and said that Miss Moore was in the drawing-room.

Miss Moore was the missionary collector for the church which the Nortons attended, and she had called for the half-yearly subscription.

'Come along to the drawing-room,' said Mr. Norton, taking Edith's hand ; 'you have grown into a regular missionary's friend at Southport ;' and the two went, swinging arms, up-stairs.

Edith was greatly delighted at hearing Miss Moore tell how successful some of the missionaries had been,—so successful that larger churches and

more schoolhouses were urgently called for ; and that the collectors had been desired to make a special appeal for funds to meet the extra expense that was required in order to take advantage of this very hopeful state of matters.

Edith felt inclined to press her papa to give Miss Moore a larger sum than usual ; but before she had put her wish into words, Mr. Norton had given Miss Moore the usual £5, stating that Mrs. Norton and he had to go to a meeting ; then pulling out his watch, he added, ‘and we must start in half an hour ; so please excuse me, for I must take a run round and see how the new conservatory, and the stables on the other side of the road, are getting on. I find that tradesmen need looking after. I do not at present see my way to increase my missionary givings this year. The fact is, I have been at a large extra expense on my property here ; but I’ll think over it ; and if I can increase “my mite,” I will. I rejoice in the good news—it’s very gratifying ; so excuse me to-night, Miss Moore. Edith here is a great missionary’s friend now. Tell her all about the thing, and she will keep it before me, I’ll

warrant you ;' and he went to look after the improvements and additions he had referred to.

Miss Moore had a short talk with Edith, and explained to her the mission schemes for which she collected. She was delighted to find 'the mere child' so sound on the subject, and so full of it. And while Miss Moore learned a good deal that was new to her, about the missionaries of the Bible, from Edith, she rather surprised the child by saying that money was only a part of what was needed, and that it was not yet expected from her in *large sums*.

'You, my darling,' said she, 'can be a little missionary about Hollybush. To papa and mamma, by your love and obedience,—to the servants, by patience and kindness,—to the little birds, by feeding them in winter,—to all the animals about you, by being gentle with them,—to the poor, by a kind word, or even a kind look,—by taking a flower to those that are unwell,—by making something or giving away what is really your own, or giving up something you have and *like* in order to give it away. An old doll of yours would make many a poor

child happy ; and if you yourself made a dress for the doll and gave both away, you would feel happier still.'

Edith listened carefully, and resolved to try to be such a missionary as Miss Moore advised her to be. And after going with Miss Moore to the lodge gate, her papa and she reached the hall door at the same time.

'I have been thinking,' said he, 'that I am getting an old man. Am I not, Bluebird? I am forty-two to-day.'

'And I'll be eleven in a fortnight,—the 18th of August is my birthday,' was her reply.

Mr. Norton looked laughingly at her, and said in a joke, 'Oh! I see what *forget-me-not* means now! You are a sly little Bluebird, and have been thinking of your own cosy nest. Have you not? Eh?'

This was said in the parlour, which they had entered.

'Papa!' said Mrs. Norton. 'Papa,' remonstratingly, 'that's hardly kind.'

'Oh, papa,' said Edith, 'I never thought of such a thing!'

‘No, you did not,’ replied Mr. Norton, drawing her kindly towards him. ‘Pardon me for teasing you, even in joke. I know that *you* did not. But *I* have been thinking of it; and as I cannot keep a secret as well as you can, I may tell you now that your birthday present will be a gold watch, with a gold chain. I have tried you for a year with my old silver one, and you have only broken one glass, and have only twice forgotten to wind it up at night; so I can trust you with a gold one now.’

‘Thank you, papa,’ said Edith sweetly; ‘and you’ll remember to think if you can give Miss Moore some more money for the missionaries. Won’t you, papa?’

But the carriage was waiting to take Mr. and Mrs. Norton to the meeting, and he only said, ‘You’ll get your watch at any rate; you may rely upon that. I’m not quite sure that I can afford to give Miss Moore any more this half-year;’ and papa and mamma kissed her as they went to the carriage, after bidding her good-night.

As soon as they were gone, Edith looked sad and puzzled; her merry smile was gone. She went

quietly to her bedroom, and when nurse came she found her crying.

‘Are you well enough, darling?’ asked the nurse; ‘or whatever is the matter with you?’

‘Quite well,’ said Edith, with a sigh; ‘but I cannot sleep till I see papa.’

‘Try it,’ said the nurse kindly; ‘I’ll sit with you till you fall over.’ But Edith lay awake, and kept sighing, and once or twice sobbing.

Mrs. Norton, on her return from the meeting, went straight to Edith’s room; when nurse told her of the restlessness, and she saw that her darling’s eyes were wide open, she bent down to kiss her, and said coaxingly, ‘Little birds should shut their eyes whenever they go to their nests.’

‘I can’t sleep to-night till I see papa,’ said Edith in a very sad tone, a tone that went to Mrs. Norton’s heart.

‘My child,’ said she anxiously, ‘you’re’—she caught herself going to say ‘fevered,’ but on second thoughts she called it—‘tired and excited. Tell me, darling, what you wish to say to papa?’

Edith fairly broke down, and, crying bitterly, said,

'I cannot sleep till I see papa to-night ;' then buried her face in the pillow.

Mrs. Norton sent the nurse to call Mr. Norton ; and this was the message she delivered : ' Please, sir, Miss Edith says that she cannot sleep till she sees you.'

' Is anything wrong ?' said Mr. Norton, greatly agitated ; for a message in exactly the same words had been brought to him, nearly seven years ago, from his only son, ' little Tommie,' a sweet child about six years of age. And when he went, he found Tommie suffering from a sore throat.

' Papa,' said that dear child, ' I cannot sleep without bidding you good-night AGAIN, and you giving me another kiss.'

It was their last kiss. In a few days Tommie died of diphtheria, ' and he was not, because God took him.'

This sad scene came into Mr. Norton's mind, or rather darted through it, almost before the nurse replied,—

' Nothing, sir, I think ; only Miss Edith is wakeful and sad.'

Thus relieved, he made for her room ; and as he opened the door he began to say, 'Whatever keeps my Bluebird's eyes open, when other birds—' But a sign from Mrs. Norton made him stop suddenly and look at Edith's flushed face. He had not long to wait for the cause of it.

'Oh, please, dear papa,' said she, 'I cannot take the gold watch,—please don't buy me one ;' and she began to cry again.

'And why can you not take it, darling ?' said he feelingly. 'Have you broken another glass of the silver one ? or have you let it fall, or lost it ? or—'

'No, papa,—no—oh no !' said Edith, crying still more bitterly. 'But I cannot take the gold one. Do, papa, please not buy it for me ;' and she got more agitated and flushed.

'Why, darling ? why ?' said he in amazement.

'Because,' sobbed she, 'you said that you did not think you could give Miss Moore more than five pounds for the new churches and schools that the missionaries need ; and if you would let me, I would like you to give her my "watch" money for that.' As she finished this sentence, she grew

quieter ; and, looking up in her papa's face, she said sweetly, 'Will you let it be that way, papa? Will you?'

When Mr. Norton found that this was all the cause of her sorrow, he smiled and said, 'But, darling, the watch and chain that I would give you would cost fifty pounds.'

'Fifty pounds, papa!' said Edith in astonishment, as she dried her eyes, and looked brighter, 'Fifty pounds! What a lot of money! Would that be too much to give to the missionaries? If you'll give them other five pounds, I will be quite happy with my old watch.'

'Would you just not bother your little head,' said Mr. Norton, patting it softly, 'about things that I said I would think about, until I find TIME to do so. Your mission to-night is to sleep, and to sleep well; so, like a dear Bluebird, put your head under your wing, and leave papa to manage things that he understands better than you do; and if you do so, I will promise to tell you some night, very soon, as much about missions, and perhaps about what I give to them, as will please even you.'

Edith was satisfied, and soon fell asleep.

When Mr. and Mrs. Norton returned to the parlour, he said, 'It was not nice of Miss Moore to confuse a mere girl's head about missionary givings.'

'Don't blame Miss Moore,' said Mrs. Norton. 'Ever since Edith saw the negro twins at Southport Miss Fanny Butler and she have spoken of little else but missions; and I feel delighted to find her interested in such a very good cause.'

'So am I, my dear—so am I,' replied Mr. Norton. 'But not even you, far less a child like Edith, could believe the numbers, indeed the hosts of missionary and benevolent objects that are brought before me every week; and how difficult it is to know to which to give, and how much to each. So the first spare night we have, we will form ourselves into a committee of the whole house, to take into our consideration all kinds of missionary work.'





CHAPTER V.

MISSIONS OF ALL KINDS.

AT breakfast on the following Saturday, Mr. Norton said that he would come home to an early dinner, and if Mrs. Norton would give them 'outside tea' he would speak about missions all the afternoon, or until Edith tired of him and them.

'I'll be delighted,' said Mrs. Norton.

'I'm sure I'll not get tired,' added Edith.

Mr. Norton made out a list of the missionary and charitable schemes to which he gave money; he also brought home with him several of the yearly reports of the societies; and after dinner, when the three had got seated in the summer-house, he spread

this list on the rustic table, and untied his bundle of pamphlets.

'Bluebird,' said he, looking kindly at Edith, 'I am very glad that you love missions and missionaries, and I will try to encourage you in every good work.' Then taking up the list, he added, 'This paper tells me what I have given this year already for good objects. As, however, we are told not to let "our right hand know what our left hand doeth," I will not tell you how much it all comes to, but I may say that it would buy more than three gold watches.'

'More than three gold watches!' said Edith in astonishment. 'More than £150, papa! What a lot of money!'

'Yes, darling,' replied he, 'a good deal more. Mamma knows how much more, but I think I will not tell you the full sum; for when I was a boy I was often told that "little birds carry tales," and I would rather not have you speak either of what I give to each, or to all put together; so I will now go over the names of some of these missions, although perhaps you will think them strange at first.'

He then read,—Blind Asylum ; Infirmary ; Life-boat Institution ; Dorcas Society ; Sailors' Home ; Coast Mission ; Soup Kitchen ; Bible Society ; Jewish Mission ; Sick Children's Hospital ; Indigent Gentlewomen ; Destitute Sick Aid Society ; London Missionary Society ; and so on.

Then turning to the yearly reports he read some of their titles,—Preston Town Mission ; American Freedmen's Association ; and several others. Stopping at that of the Deaf and Dumb Institution, he handed Edith the report, opened at a page with a lot of hands printed on it pointing to each other, and said, 'That's the dumb alphabet, for teaching the dumb to speak on their fingers.'

'On their fingers, papa?' said she. 'On their fingers?—how funny!'

'Yes, on their fingers ; and if you will learn the "signs"—at the same time pointing out to her the sign for A, then for B, etc.—'you will be able to *speak* with your fingers to a *deaf* girl, and she will *speak* to you with hers. I suppose you know that the blind people read with their fingers ; the letters on their books stick up from the paper like

"Hollybush," but only larger, on mamma's note-paper.'

'Indeed, papa,' said Edith, 'I do not think I have seen a book like that; but I will try to learn the dumb alphabet.'

'And, darling,' added her mamma, 'I will take you to see the Blind Asylum, and the Deaf and Dumb Institution, some day soon.'

'Thank you, mamma,' said Edith, 'that will be very nice. I did not know that things like these were missionary things, or that there were so many of them.'

'There's thirty-nine on my list here,' said Mr. Norton; 'and I have written down on another leaf the money I give to our own church, and to pension old workmen, and some poor neighbours; but I do not count giving to my own church anything more than paying a just debt. On a third leaf I have put down what I pay to the Poor-law Guardians for supporting the poor; and when I add all together it looks a very large sum—just a great lot of money! Too large for a little Bluebird to understand,' added he, tapping her under the chin.

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‘Thank you, papa,’ said Edith, ‘for telling me all these things ; but are the ten pounds you give to Miss Moore all that you give to foreign missions, papa?’

‘Oh no, dear ; I help the Bible Society, and it prints Bibles in ever so many languages, and gives away for nothing a great many to the heathen abroad, and to poor people at home that cannot pay for them ; and I give something to the London and other missionary societies.’

As he said this, a little Robin Redbreast hopped up to the door of the summer-house, perched for a second on the step, and then flew away.

Edith started up to see where it had gone, and Mrs. Norton said, ‘Thank you, Robin, for your broad hint. We will follow your good example as long as the day is so bright.’

As she said this, Mr. Norton slipped quietly to the door, touched Edith’s shoulder, said, ‘You won’t catch me!’—then off scampered he, off shot she, making the garden ring with her merry laugh, and papa had reached the new vinery before Edith caught him.

When mamma came up, Mr. Norton was telling

Edith that the vinery and the other new things he was putting up at Hollybush would cost a lot of money, and that he would need to be careful not to give too much away until these were paid,—‘for,’ added he, “charity begins at home,” and I may be doing as much good in giving work and wages to working-men as in giving charity.’

‘Very true, papa,’ said Mrs. Norton, “charity begins at home,” but it must not end there ; it is not easy to draw the line between the “self-pleasing” and the “self-denying” in these matters ; but we will not puzzle Bluebird’s head any more at present.’

The new vinery had brought missions back to Edith’s memory, and she said, ‘Miss Moore told me that it was a good sign when missionaries asked for more money, because when they went to a place at first they needed little more than their food ; but when God had blessed their work they required to have churches and schools built, and as the heathen would not pay for these at first, the churches had as well not send out missionaries at all as refuse to supply them with houses and churches and schools. It would be like building a

vinery and grudging the money to buy plants to put into it.

‘Miss Moore said, too,’ continued she, ‘that when we wished nice things for ourselves we should think whether we have given Jesus what we owe Him. But I’m sure,’ added Edith, looking lovingly into her papa’s face, ‘after what you told me in the summer-house, that you did not take any of the money you owe Jesus to build this vinery, you will have given Him all you owe Him, haven’t you, papa?’

This was a very long speech for a girl like Edith. While she was making it, she saw her papa look at mamma, at her, at the roof, and then at mamma again. Both seemed grave, and remained silent for some time after it was finished.

‘Oh, many a shaft at random sent
Finds mark the archer never meant.’

For these simple words of Edith’s were stirring their hearts, and pressing home the question, ‘How much owest thou to my Lord?’

Greatly to their relief, the tea bell was rung just then, and as Edith was to make out tea, she darted

off to take the head of the table, while papa and mamma followed soberly and in deep thought. Bluebird's merry heart, and 'playing at being mamma,' as she called it, brought back the smile to Mr. and Mrs. Norton's faces, who both looked pleased when she said, 'Mamma, should we not all give the best things that we have to Jesus, who gave Himself for us?'

'Certainly, darling ; and the things He likes best are our hearts, our love, ourselves !'

'I would like to give Him my birthday watch too, mamma,' said Edith ; then looking at Mr. Norton, 'if papa would allow me.'

Mr. Norton was a little puzzled how to reply. He felt that Edith's heart was right in the matter, and was unwilling to damp her zeal ; so, addressing Mrs. Norton, he asked, 'Do you know, mamma, if the watchmaker has any children?'

'He has a good many,' replied she. 'I called on Tuesday, and his shopkeeper told me that some of them were so ill that he had not been at business for two days.'

'Indeed,' said Mr. Norton, 'he may need money ;

and if we do not buy this watch, and other people do not buy watches and jewellery, he will need to shut his shop, and pay away all his workmen ; and they and he, and his children and theirs, may be starved before they find other work.'

'That would never do, papa,' said Edith.

'Come here, Bluebird, and let me see that blue sash,' said her papa. Edith, for tea was now over, came and stood by his chair ; he lifted the end of the sash, and said, 'It's silk I see, and very pretty. When mamma bought that, she helped to feed the poor people in Italy and China that rear the silk-worms, and the sailors that brought over the silk, and the weavers of Coventry, and the drapers in Preston ; and if everybody gave over wearing silk, and wore only plain cotton, all those poor people would starve.'

'That would be dreadful, papa !' said Edith seriously.

As Edith ended, the nurse came to the tea-table and handed Mr. Norton a letter ; and as the evening was getting cold, she brought warm shawls for Mrs. Norton and Edith, who thanked her for her

thoughtfulness. When Mr. Norton read the letter, which was from their minister, stating that some friends had dropped in on him unexpectedly, and asking if Mr. Norton could oblige him by finding quarters for a brother minister, he handed the letter to Mrs. Norton. As soon as she read it, she told nurse to tell the coachman to drive to the minister's, and say that they would have much pleasure in having his friend as their guest, and that the carriage would wait for him. She also sent instructions to the housemaid to have the bedroom made ready.

When the nurse had gone, Mr. Norton, speaking in a bantering tone, said, 'It has just struck me, that if we wished to give more money for missions we might do without the carriage, and old George the coachman too; and, Bluebird, you are nearly eleven, and must give *up* something as well as mamma and I. What do you two say to paying off nurse, who loves and serves you both so well, and who loved Tommie?'

Edith could endure this no longer; she threw her arms round her papa's neck, and said, 'Dear papa,

please do not say any more about these things just now, I did not think of them ; but I see what you mean now, and that you know far, far better than I do ; so pardon me, papa, if I have vexed you about the watch ; I will be very happy to have it—*very.*

‘You have not vexed me, darling,’ said he, ‘not at all, nor mamma either ;’ for Edith by this time had left papa and thrown her arms round her mamma’s neck.

‘No, darling, no,’ said her mamma ; ‘but both you and I now see that papa is wiser and sees more than we do, so do not bother your little head either about *his* mission-work or *mine*, but think on your own. Ours to you is to train you so as to help you to make “the best of both worlds.” Yours is to love and obey us in the Lord, and you can do this at your lessons, at your piano, at your games, in the house, indeed everywhere. Papa forgot to speak about a “flower mission,”’ added she, pointing to the flowers around her.

‘A flower mission, mamma!—a flower mission ! what’s that?’

‘Making little bouquets of flowers and giving them to sick people, or sending them to hospitals or infirmaries. Invalids like flowers so much ; they brighten the sick-room, and remind them of the “Rose of Sharon,” the “Lily of the Valley,” and the “Balm of Gilead.” There are hundreds of flowers going to waste in our garden that might be made missionaries.’

‘I’ll ask Jones the gardener on Monday to give me flowers, and I’ll try to make the bouquets myself.’

‘That’s right,’ said her mamma.

‘And I will give you a bit of ground to keep entirely yourself, planting, weeding, etc.,’ said her papa ; ‘and then the bouquets will be “your very own.”’

This made Edith a happy girl, the ‘Oh, thank you, papa!’ was so heartily said, that it made all three cheerful ; and as they had now risen to leave, mamma, turning to Edith, said, ‘I am sure that my dear Bluebird joins me in thanking papa for so kindly explaining mission - work, and so clearly too, for we think we see now that if people whom

God has blessed were to give over everything they can do without, and have their houses and their food, and their dress as plain as plain could be, many of God's best gifts would be useless, and thousands would starve: clever men would get nobody to buy their pictures, or other things of beauty, and we would all become savages together. Indeed, it would, as merchants say, *ruin* the world.'

'That's quite true,' replied papa; 'and if those who can afford these things buy them, and use them properly, they are doing God service; but not to weary you, I must admit that Bluebird's story about "grudging to buy the vines after building the vinery" is working its way through my heart into my purse, and we will see on her birthday what it has done there.'

Shortly after their return to the drawing-room, Edith opened the piano unasked, and played 'Home, sweet Home' with more feeling than she had ever done before—so sweetly, indeed, that none of them observed that the stranger minister had arrived until he was shown into the drawing-room; and what

surprised them all most was that Mr. and Mrs. Norton and he could hardly speak as they shook hands with one another. At length he said, while the tear stood in his eye, "Home, sweet Home," that takes me back to Africa.'

'Indeed,' said Edith with great interest, 'are you a missionary?'

'I was one for many years, and the native converts sung a hymn to that tune. It is to me the sweetest tune in any language.' 'And to me,' said Mrs. Norton. 'And to me,' said Mr. Norton.

'I'll remember that, and practise it well,' thought Edith.

Mr. Paterson, for that was the stranger's name, had been a most energetic missionary, but partly owing to his health, partly to the pressure of friends at home, he had, after several years' mission-work abroad, settled as a minister in England.

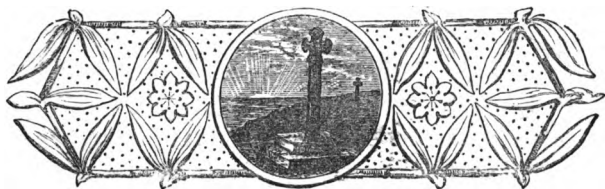
He gave a most interesting account of his work, and its results in many ways. In the way of trade, the tribe he laboured amongst had almost none when he first went out, and within ten years they sold yearly to traders over £15,000 worth.

‘Indeed,’ said he, ‘I declined a merchant’s offer of a situation worth double my income as a missionary; and if the Home churches knew how well the native converts *work* and *give*, and how much the missionary has himself to expend on the stations, they would supply churches and schools more readily.

‘May God quicken His people to comply with Christ’s *last* command before His *ascension*, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” as generally as they do with His *last* command before His *death*, “This do in remembrance of me;” to consider the searching questions, “Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?” “Is this thy kindness to thy friend?” And to remember that praying without giving is mockery, and that giving without prayer does the giver no good.’

Mr. Norton, Mrs. Norton, and Edith asked God that night to help them to lay these words up in their hearts and practise them in their lives.





CHAPTER VI.

THE GIRL MISSIONARY.

ON Monday forenoon Edith set about her Flower Mission work, by asking the gardener if he had any flowers to spare.

‘There’s armfuls on ’em a-spoilin’, please, Miss,’ said he, lifting his cap as he added, ‘and please, Miss, ’ow you’ve a-growed at t’ sea-side!’

‘You think I am taller, Mr. Jones, do you?’ said she. ‘I daresay I am; but about the flowers, I wish to make some little bouquets for a Flower Mission; can I have some to do this, please?’

‘Lots,’ answered Jones, ‘lots, Miss; and I’ll help you to put some on ’em up. I knows what you wants; I makes ’em often for Joe Fearnley. They

needs a good bit o' th' green, an' them's best liked as smells nice.'

Both set to work, and a basketful of bouquets was delivered at the Infirmary next morning, and at least twice a week a large hamperful, mostly made by Edith herself, was sent to similar institutions.

Jones the gardener told his wife shortly after this, that 'Miss Edith was a right sort, her was ; her could make a bouquet like a gardener, and her spoke so nice, her did.'

Nurse also spoke of Edith being taller, and 'ever so much nicer somehow,'—tidier, kinder, so fond too of the morning and evening chapters, now quite a little woman, and quite a lady too.

They gathered together a lot of old dolls and toys, and 'trigged them up.' Nurse was surprised at the patience with which Edith stitched away, 'just beautiful, and very careful,' and she did laugh heartily when Edith told her that she was making 'Home Missionaries' of them, and that all mission-work should be 'the very best.'

Bluebird did not, however, forget that she was still a girl, but skipped about and romped until

the house and garden rang with her merry noise ; she had a kind word and a pleasant smile for every one, and as love begets love, all the servants felt cheered by her winsome ways ; indeed,

‘ The blithest bird upon the bush,
Had ne’er a lighter heart than she.’

Bluebird was (almost unknown to her mamma) becoming more a companion, and less *a* child, although not less *her* child. When she took her to visit the Blind Asylum, or the Deaf and Dumb Institution, she was so bright, and so much interested in all she saw, that the superintendents had great pleasure in showing her everything. And little thoughtful kindnesses, such as opening or closing the carriage windows, Edith did so promptly and so carefully, that her mamma more and more felt that her girl loved her.

She did not now require to be told to practise her music ; she liked it because it pleased papa, and therefore she went at it ‘with a will.’ Sometimes she played for such a long time that Mrs. Norton proposed, as a rest, that they should take a stroll through the garden. The making of

the Flower Mission bouquets had taught Bluebird the names of so many of the flowers, as well as their uses and beauties, that mamma said she had become quite a gardener.

Papa somehow did not weary now for Edith's bedtime as he had occasionally done, because her music delighted him, and instead of requiring as formerly to amuse her, she read so much, or did her needlework so quietly, that, missing her prattle, he would lay down his book and ask her to hop or chirp or sing, or divert him in any way she liked, which Bluebird did as readily, as trippingly, and as fairy-like as ever.

Mr. Norton was reading the newspaper when Edith entered the parlour on the morning of her eleventh birthday. Mamma had already wished her many happy returns of the day, and put round her neck a handsome gold chain, from which hung a locket. Inside were small coloured pictures of her papa and mamma; outside were the letters of her name, lying on the top of one another, set in some places with precious stones. Mamma had to help Edith to read the letters, or, as she called it, 'the

monogram.' Mamma also gave her a brooch, with a 'window' in the middle of it, in which were small locks of hair,—papa's, mamma's, little Tommie's, and her own,—while round the 'window' was a wreath of lovely 'forget-me-nots,' containing precious stones of various colours.

Papa kissed her fondly, wished her many happy returns of her birthday,—looked at and praised the locket and brooch,—wondered if there would be room for another gold chain on her neck,—put one on, and held the watch to her ear, saying playfully, 'What does it say, Bluebird?'

'Tick, tick, tick!' said Edith, and the 'Thank you, papa,' which followed was almost lost in 'Eleven to-day—eleven to-day—eleven to-day! Sing, Birdie, sing! sing, Birdie, sing!' which papa kept chiming to the tick, tick, tick of the watch.

As Edith was admiring it, her papa handed her a letter, saying,—

'Here's a letter for Miss Moore; you may read it if you like before I close it.'

As Edith took the letter out of the envelope, she did not observe that a crumpled bit of paper fell

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out, and she was so much taken up with the letter that she did not even observe papa pick it up.

Before she had read half of the letter her eye brightened, and, looking up, she said in astonishment, '£100, papa! A hundred pounds! Dear, dear papa! And what a pretty letter this is! I'll read it again, and "out" this time.

"MY DEAR MISS MOORE,—A little Bluebird has pled for your good schemes so strongly, and has shown the older birds so clearly 'how much they owe,' that we send her on her eleventh birthday with an olive leaf (£100), as a thankoffering to *Him* from whom all blessings flow. May His kingdom advance in our hearts, our land, and our world!—Yours, with every kind wish, from

"THE OLD BIRDS AND THE FLEDGLING
AT HOLLYBUSH."

Edith's delight was unbounded; she kissed papa twice or thrice, and mamma as often, and was preparing to close the letter, when Mr. Norton asked,—
'But where's the money, Bluebird?'

She felt in the envelope—opened and shook the

letter—looked on the floor, under the table, round the room, ay, even under her plate,—but no money could be seen.

‘Where is it?’ said she. ‘It was not in the letter when I got it, I’m sure of that.’

‘Are you quite sure?’ asked her papa.

‘Quite sure—quite sure, papa—quite!’

‘But,’ said he laughingly, ‘I’m quite sure it was. In your hurry it dropped as you opened the letter; you did not even see me pick it up.’ Then handing her the £100 note, he added, ‘There it is; take better care of it this time.’

Edith never had so much money in her hand before, she seemed afraid to touch it; when she had read £100, which was on it both in figures and in letters, she handed it back to her papa saying, ‘Please, papa, seal this letter yourself; and won’t you go with me to Miss Moore’s?’

‘I’ll land you to her door, and the carriage will pick you up as it returns; but I am so ashamed at having hitherto forgotten my duty, that I would rather not call for Miss Moore to-day; so, darling, get ready, and we’ll be off.’

Edith's face was bright and happy as she entered Miss Moore's parlour. When that lady put out her hand to welcome her, Edith actually did not shake hands with her; her heart was so full, and she was in such a hurry, that she pushed the letter into Miss Moore's hands, and said, 'Papa sent me with this, and I'm so glad,—open it, Miss Moore,—oh, open it, please!'

Miss Moore did not drop the £100. *It* was first in coming out with her, and as soon as she saw it she said, 'God, I thank Thee.' And taking Edith suddenly in her arms, 'Kiss me, child; kiss me, darling!' said she, while tears of joy ran down her cheeks.

'But the letter,' said Edith, 'the letter, Miss Moore—read it; isn't it funny?'

When Miss Moore read the letter, she again pressed Edith to her heart, called her 'a dear, dear child,' and, what pleased Edith best, 'a true missionary.' She also wrote a letter of heartfelt thanks, in which, amongst other things, she stated that her prayer was 'that the good seed which the Bluebird had brought would be blessed alike to those from

whom it came and to those to whom it was sent,—that she may find “a nest for herself;” “even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God!” etc.

Mr. Norton somehow felt very happy that day—felt as if his heart was beating warmer—felt younger and richer, rather than poorer. Edith was very happy too. Almost as soon as she got home, but not until mamma and she had read Miss Moore's letter more than once, she went to the piano and made it rejoice with her; then to the garden to make the Flower Mission bouquets, as well as to give the gardener a birthday present, which her mamma had provided for him and for each servant, and which they valued all the more for the sweet and natural way in which Edith presented them.

The stables in the field at the bottom of the garden were now occupied by the work-horses from the mill, and honest Joe Fearnley was made happy by Edith thanking him for taking the bouquets to the different institutions. Joe had as kind and true a heart as ever beat. He had occasionally got a few flowers for sick friends and neighbours, and his being made the bearer of basketfuls to the

suffering and the lonely gave him as much real pleasure as doing his horses every justice did, and that is saying a very great deal. He grinned from ear to ear as Edith thanked him, and, twirling his bonnet in his hand, which he had taken off whenever Edith appeared, he said, 'Oh, Miss, don't thank me, aw likes it! Nothin' better an' if you only see'd as 'ow them as gets 'em likes 'em, an' 'ow their wite faces brightens w'en they sees 'em! Thaw'dst—thaw'dst—thaw'dst—cry!' and the tear started to Joe's eye as he said this,—'thaw wouldst!'

But lunch bell was now rung, and Edith darted off before Joe could tell her that he intended to ask her, if she would allow him sometimes to get one for his poor blind sister, Mary Ann.

A happier dinner party could not have been found in Great Britain that night, nor a happier drawing-room one either, for Uncle and Aunt Bolton were there, and the Rev. Mr. Bamford and Miss Moore. And when Edith had gone to bed, Mr. Norton went over Bluebird's plea for Missions, and told how her simple earnestness had opened their hearts. He spoke so modestly, and yet so

strongly of the benefit that Mrs. Norton and he had received from being thus led to do more for Christ's cause abroad, that Uncle Bolton said, 'I think I must increase "my mite" too.'

'Your MITE, Mr. Bolton?' said Mr. Bamford. 'YOUR mite? Jesus commended the widow's two mites for it was ALL she had ; but, pardon me, I speak with all respect, yet in faithfulness, I must say that for a man of your wealth to speak of "your *mite*,"—your MITE to Him is—is—is—I hardly know what to call it, for it is—it is—unworthy of you and dishonouring to Him !'

'You need not be so very timid, Mr. Bamford,' said Mr. Bolton pleasantly. 'I was once at a Methodist Missionary Meeting, and I saw a man there, the hardest and most niggardly man without exception I ever knew ; the collectors were going round the chapel, while at the same time the congregation were singing,—

" Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small ;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Deserves, demands my life, my all ! "

My miserly friend was singing louder than anybody, and the class leader who was collecting said to him, as he held the box out before him, "Brother, don't sing so loud, thou'rt contradictin' thyself; thou'rt fumblin' in thy pocket for a fourpenny bit." I am as far wrong about my MITE, as he was about his "bit," and I thank you for your faithfulness.'

The result was, that shortly after this, Miss Moore received a valuable 'olive leaf' from Mr. Bolton for Missions, which proved a cause of 'abundant thankfulness to God.'

When Miss Auckland, Edith's governess, returned after the vacation, she found that Edith had got many new friends by making 'Missionaries' of her dolls and toys, and that many a pretty bouquet was given by her to the sick and the solitary. Widow Backhouse said of her, 'she was sure if her clothes were off that you'd see her white wings, for when she comes to see me it's a real angel's visit, that it is.'

Indeed, Edith did good so heartily, because she liked it, that she hardly knew she was doing it, only she felt happy herself when she helped to make other people happy.

Miss Auckland found it easier to teach Edith now, for she looked on her lessons as mission-work. Miss Fanny had told her that her mission as a girl was to learn to obey, and to be diligent, so as to fit herself for whatever God might require of her; 'love-to' made everything easy; and some things that had been wearisome before, became actually pleasant to her now. She tried to master her lessons *herself*, and when she managed to do this with a very difficult one it made her governess and herself so happy, that every day they became faster friends.

One thing, however, Miss Auckland wished Edith to be much more careful about, and that was speaking so freely to the common people, and especially to Joe Fearnley. Edith sometimes, when telling what Joe said, spoke like him, and as it was Miss Auckland's duty to train Edith to speak good English, she could not permit this. Miss Auckland had, besides, observed a woman coming about the stable, and not knowing that she was Joe's sister, she thought it her duty to let Mrs. Norton know that such was the case.

Joe loved poor Mary Ann, and she loved him. As she was blind, her brother led her, guided or amused her in a way that those who did not know all about them could not but think strange; and as neither Mr. nor Mrs. Norton knew about Joe's blind sister, they thought when they saw the two acting so strangely, that the sooner the waggoner was changed the better.

Accordingly Mr. Norton told the manager of the mill to employ Fearnley in some other way, and to find another man for the horses.

'What?' said the manager in amazement. 'Change Joe? There isn't a waggoner like him in Lancashire! He's the soberest, quietest, regularest, best man in the place,—always civil, always up to time,—he loves his horses, and they love him. We'll never get his match, *never!*'

'Try him as a fireman at the boilers, and send Clayton to the horses,' said Mrs. Norton so decidedly, that the manager ceased to plead for Joe.

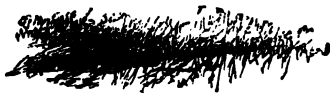
Joe was as much surprised as the manager when he was told to leave the horses and take the 'fires.'

'What? my horses?' said Joe. 'My horses? Dick

tak' 'em?' But little was said on the subject, for both were in the dark as to Mr. Norton's reasons for the change.

Joe asked Dick Clayton to be kind to Sam and Tom, for so the horses were called; for they, added he, 'they's got fine natur's has Sam and Tom, 'specially Sam, and their poor 'arts would break if they was cross done to.'

Joe had been gone for fully a fortnight before Edith knew of it, and she only discovered this when she required the 'Flower Mission' hamper to fill it with the 'Friday' bouquets, and found that those which she had prepared for the Infirmary earlier in the week were still undelivered, and therefore withered and useless.





CHAPTER VII.

BLESSING AND BLEST.

JOE'S old friends Sam and Tom sometimes brought coals to the steam-boilers. He was always glad to see them, and had an apple or a slice of bread for each. The horses seemed as glad to see him, they rubbed their heads on his face, all but spoke to him, and looked happy.

One day Dick Fearnley had a whip in his hand, and Joe heard him 'crack' it.

'W'atever's that you've got, Dick?' said Joe.

'A whip,' replied Dick. 'Ain't it a nice 'un?'

'But w'atever is it for, Dick?' said he anxiously.

'For the 'orses, to be sure; they needs a bit of a thong.'

‘Not they, Dick,’ said Joe in horror. ‘Not they, poor things. Don’t, Dick, like a good lad, whip either Sam or Tom; ’twould break their ’arts it would, an’ mine too, Dick. Aw’d rather thaw’dst whip me.’

Dick was not a cruel man, and for a fortnight he did not use the whip at all, but one Saturday afternoon he had been later than usual, and wishing the horses to go up hill a little quicker, he struck Tom. The horse quivered all over, and ran off. Sam followed.

Luckily Joe’s work was over for the week, and he was waiting at the hill-top to spend part of the afternoon with his old friends Sam and Tom. When he saw them dashing up the hill at such a furious rate, he called out, ‘What’s up, Tom?—wo, old lad! Wo Sam, wo!’

Tom knew the voice, became quieter, stopped, hid his head under Joe’s arm, looked as if both ashamed and affronted, and shook like a leaf. Sam also put his head as near Joe as he could, and seemed to beg pardon. Joe stroked them both, and cried to Dick, whom he saw coming up,

‘Pitch the w’ip over th’ edge, Dick, and halt a bit. I’ll take the ’orses ’ome.’

Mr. Norton, who had seen the horses running, and that Joe had prevented an accident, was greatly struck, when he went to the stables, with the intense tenderness of Joe, and the cautious, loving way in which he comforted the still trembling Tom.

The waggon had galled Tom’s shoulder, and Joe respectfully asked if he might go to the kitchen and get a little hot water to bathe it.

‘You had better stay in the stable, and Clayton will fetch it,’ said Mr. Norton.

While Clayton was absent, Joe said meekly, ‘Please, sir, may I g’t back to the ’orses; I thinks they’s a-missin’ me, sir.’

‘I fear not, Joe,’ replied Mr. Norton. ‘You have done for yourself there, lad.’

Joe looked inquiringly at his master, and said in a humble, surprised manner, ‘I beg your pardon, sir, was there any fault? I’m very sorry if there was, sir. I don’t know what it was, sir;’ and his tone was so pitiful, but so honest, as he added, with the tear in his eye, ‘Please tell me my fault; I’d take it

so kind, sir ; please do, sir,' that Mr. Norton said feelingly,—

'Well, Joe, to be plain with you, I was angry at your bringing that woman about the stables, and at what I thought the strange behaviour of both of you.'

Joe opened wide his eyes, and looked wonderingly into Mr. Norton's face as he said, 'Do you mean Mary Ann, sir? Please, sir, she's my poor blind sister ; an' she coom up with my dinner, an' I tried to divert her, sir ; for she's blind, sir. An', please, I didn't think that you'd be angry at that, sir ; she's such a good girl ; an' she likes the 'orses, sir, an' they likes her, sir. An' father an' mother's dead, an' we're all one another has in the world, sir. An' if I gets back to the 'orses, she'll never come up again, please, sir ; an'—'

Here Mr. Norton broke in with, 'For mercy's sake stop, Joe,—your poor blind sister !' while the tears ran down his cheeks ; 'your poor blind sister ! I am angry at myself for having treated her and you so cruelly and so unjustly. Forgive me, Joe ; forgive me. I wish I could forgive myself.'

Dick Clayton's footsteps were now heard, and Mr. Norton and Joe had hardly recovered themselves when he entered the stable. Mr. Norton glided out as Clayton came in, and signed to Joe to follow him.

'Please, sir, if you'll allow me, aw'll coom up after Dick an' me gets Tom put to rights, sir,' said Joe.

'Thank you, Joe,' was Mr. Norton's reply; 'that's right. I forgot Tom.'

'He don't look as if he'd forgot Tom, do he, Joe?' said Dick, after the master had gone; 'he looks as if he'd took it very bad. I wish you'd come back to the 'orses, Joe.'

'Do you, Dick?' was Joe's answer. 'I'll ask t' master to let me back when I goes up.'

Dick was astonished, indeed tired at Joe's 'a-doctorin'' of both Sam and Tom, it was so thoroughly and so thoughtfully done. 'I feels a bit hungry, Joe; will you put 'em all right to-night?' said he; and as Joe gladly promised to do this, Dick went home.

Mr. Norton walked in the garden for a short

time, for his eyes were hot, and his heart was sore. When he went into the house, Mrs. Norton, observing his agitation, said, 'I hope there's nothing wrong, dear ; you look vexed. Had the horses really run off, and has there been an accident?'

'There would have been, but for Joe Fearnley,' said he in rather a husky voice.

'Joe Fearnley!' said Mrs. Norton ; 'that's the waggoner that you had to put away for bringing the—'

Mr. Norton could hold out no longer, but gulping out 'His poor blind sister!' threw himself into an easy-chair, and buried his face in his handkerchief. Mrs. Norton was stunned too, and repeating, 'HIS POOR BLIND SISTER!' she went to her own room, to give vent to her feelings. Miss Auckland also was humbled and grieved at the great injustice she had done to the poor waggoner.

Edith did not know why Joe had been put away, and she therefore could not quite understand what made the others so sad. As she looked out at the window she saw Joe enter the garden, and told papa that he was coming to the house.

‘Bring him to the front door,—bring him into the parlour, darling,’ said he.

Edith darted off on this errand of love, took Joe’s horny hand, but she had great difficulty in getting him to come to the front door, and greater still in getting him to enter the parlour, where Mrs. Norton and Miss Auckland had now joined Mr. Norton.

Joe stood twirling his cap, and occasionally pulling the front lock of his hair, while making a series of respectful bows.

Mr. Norton said, ‘Joe, Joe,’ and stopped suddenly. Joe, thinking he might be anxious about the horses, said,—

‘Please, sir, the ’orses is all right, an’ by Monday they’ll be none the worse, sir.’

‘It’s not the horses, it’s your poor blind sister ; we did not know you had a sister at all, far less a blind one ; and we all ask you to forgive us, Joe, for—’

‘Don’t, sir, please, sir,’ said Joe, ‘you’re a-vexin’ the ladies, sir ; an’ I begs all your pardons for bringin’ her ; an’ she won’t come again, sir.’

‘But she must come again,’ said Mrs. Norton tearfully.

For a short time there was a painful silence. It looked a sad parlour. At length Edith said, ‘Has your sister always been blind?’

‘Yes, Miss, her was born blind.’

‘I would like to see her; may I go, mamma? Where do you live, Joe?’ and many such questions were put by Edith, which gave the others time to settle themselves. The result was that Mr. and Mrs. Norton told Joe that they would pay his sister a visit in the evening.

Joe bowed several times, and said ‘Thank you’ pretty often, as he left the parlour. Mr. Norton and Edith followed, and all went through the garden to the stables.

‘May I take them fallen apples to ’em?’ asked Joe.

‘Certainly,’ was Mr. Norton’s reply.

The horses knew Joe’s foot, and neighed when they heard it.

Edith was amused when she saw Tom take the apples out of Joe’s pocket, and Sam stretch his head as far over the stall as he could, tug at Joe’s

coat, and take the apples out of his pocket when Joe held it up.

‘Do they always do that, Joe? how do they know that you had apples for them?’ asked Edith.

‘They allers does it on Sundays, please, Miss; for I gives ‘em both a cake of Ormskirk ginge’bread every Sunday.’ Joe then turned to Mr. Norton, and said, ‘Please, sir, Dick Clayton axed me to say as he’d be glad if I’d coom back to the ‘orses, sir; may I, please, sir?’

‘Yes, Joe, yes—a hundred times yes,—on one condition, and that is that Mary Ann comes too, every day she can,’ said Mr. Norton so heartily that Joe thanked him, and bowed to Mr. Norton and to Edith several times, and said, ‘Them’s easy terms, sir, them is.’

They overheard him saying to himself, ‘Won’t Mary Ann be glad! When her heard Dick “crack” his whip, it made her quite ill, it did.’

Mr. Norton and Edith had scarcely crossed the public road on their way to the garden when they heard Joe first lock the stable door, then unlock it, and say, ‘I’m coomin’ back again, Tom, old lad;

us'll be all right now, won't us, Sam?' before he re-locked the door.

There was not in Preston a happier man than honest Joe Fearnley that night, and a happier woman than Mary Ann would have been difficult to find. She had fretted as much about the horses as about Joe, and it was only when he told her that he was to get back to Tom and Sam, that he learned how very much Dick's whip had vexed her.

Joe lived in a long street of houses, so uniform in shape, size, and plan, that the only difference to a stranger between all of them, seemed to be the black numbers painted on a white circle above each door.

Mrs. Norton carrying a basket containing two bunches of grapes, Edith with a bouquet in her hand, Mr. Norton with four packets of Ormskirk gingerbread under his arm, reached the street in which Joe lived, and were looking for the number, when Mrs. Norton said, 'What a beautiful window-screen,—it's perfect!'

Mr. Norton observed the healthy flowers and the trim grass of the very, very little plot in front of the same house, but Edith was even more delighted to

see Joe's honest face grinning with intense delight above the window-screen.

When they entered they found that the inside of the house was neatness itself, and Joe's poor blind sister's face was so bright and so sweet, that even Edith felt that Mary Ann was a lady, while her modest curtsy and respectful welcome charmed them all.

Joe could not be induced to sit down; he grinned, turned to the window, leaned first on one foot, then on another; looked to the ceiling, to the floor, to the clock, to the street, but he had not the courage to look at any of the Nortons, although his eye beamed as it rested on Mary Ann.

When 'Joe' became the subject of conversation he felt very uncomfortable, for Mary Ann spoke so lovingly and so truthfully of his brotherly care and kindness, that he, muttering something about 'the 'orses' supper time,' was making for the door, when Mr. Norton handed him the gingerbread.

Joe grinned. '*All that!*' said he. 'They shall have two to-night, both on 'em;' and putting four cakes in his pocket, he went out of the kitchen backwards, bowing and grinning, and bowing again.

A little box on the mantelpiece caught Edith's eye. 'Missionary Box' was painted on it. While mamma was taking the grapes out of the basket, Edith asked Mary Ann about this box, who told her that every night she had an hour of special knitting of stockings, or, pointing to the window-screen, 'of such as that, and when the work is sold, the money is put into that box.' She also told her that Joe put in the money he got for odd jobs, and every six months they divided it among societies for doing good at home and abroad.

Altogether the visit was a delightful one, although Mrs. Norton felt a little annoyed to hear Mary Ann, as soon as she received the grapes, name over a lot of sick and poor people to whom they were to go. 'They're for yourself—yourself and Joe only,' said Mrs. Norton.

'Please, ma'am, I'll eat one now, but they'd be far sweeter to me if them as needs 'em more gets 'em.'

This silenced Mrs. Norton, but Edith would not give her the bouquet until Mary Ann promised not to give it away till either she brought her or gave her another.

‘Give her them when she comes to Hollybush,’ said Mr. Norton ; ‘for, as we must leave now, I may tell you, Mary Ann, that Joe goes back to the horses on one condition, and that is that you also come as often as you can.’

Mary Ann’s daily walk was to ‘Holly Parks,’ where the stables stood. Edith often led her through the garden, and sometimes into the house, where, as she was fond of music, Edith played and sang her blind friend’s favourite hymns, which were mostly missionary ones.

Edith was allowed occasionally to visit Mary Ann at her own house, Joe always taking her and bringing her home ; and Edith’s missionary zeal was wisely directed, and increased by Mary Ann’s sensible, careful, honest assistance and advice. Many a home in Preston was cheered, and many a heart gladdened, by what the two between them devised and carried out.

Nor were foreign missions forgotten, for on the first Monday of every month Edith read to her blind friend *Missionary Magazines* ; and she learned in return a great deal about various missions, of

which Mary Ann had heard in the Scotch church at Blackburn where she once lived. She also told her about hundreds of orphans in India, who, when nothing but famine, starvation, and death were before them, were taken into an 'orphanage,' and fed and educated, and taught to know Jesus and His Great Salvation.

' For far across the ocean
The Church had heard the cry,
And in electric pulses
Had flashed the quick reply :
Let six hundred of the orphans
Be clothèd and be fed,
For His sake who, though an hungered,
Gave this world the living bread.

' And in the Beawr Orphanage,
Go lay this little leaven,
Of such as form Christ's kingdom
On earth, as well as heaven.
And the verdict of the Master,
To each, to all shall be—
"To the least of these ye did it,
Ye did it unto me."

Mrs. Norton employed Mary Ann to knit window curtains for her of the pattern which she had liked so well as a window-screen, and other people

admired them so much that Mary Ann got a great many to make, and she was well paid for them.

As for Joe, he was as happy as a king ; what with his horses, and the bouquets he had to deliver to the various charitable institutions, and the kindness that Mary Ann received at Hollybush, and the good which this enabled them both to do.

Edith paid her promised visit to Miss Fanny Butler during the Christmas holidays, and Miss Fanny was amazed at the progress which her dear Bluebird had made in missionary work. 'You beat me completely,' said she ; 'I am the scholar now, and you are the teacher.' And when the summer holidays came again, and the two families revisited Southport, Mrs. Norton had Mary Ann down for ten days ; Joe came for a single day ; but it would take a volume to give an account of the delightful tea-party, at which 'Shrimp Mary,' Mary Ann, Miss Fanny Butler, Edith, nurse, and Joe talked about missions until their hearts glowed.

Miss Moore also could have told that Bluebird's olive leaf was succeeded by other and larger ones ; while the charitable institutions of Preston, Lanca-

shire, and Britain rejoiced in the increased liberality and personal labours of Mr. and Mrs. Norton.

As Edith grew older her head grew wiser, while at the same time her heart kept as warm as ever. When she was finishing her education on the Continent, her letters not only comforted her parents and delighted Mary Ann, and many other friends, but her school companions learned from her example to be diligent at their lessons, as well as to be tender-hearted, useful, and zealous of good works.

Edith is not called Bluebird now; that name is used very rarely, and only by her papa when speaking of bygone days. But as Miss Norton she serves God, and is helpful to many.

When walking around Preston, if you pass a certain open gate, and see a happy party playing at lawn tennis, that handsome young lady with the blue sash, whose merry face and clever playing delights everybody, was once called Bluebird.

If on Sabbath afternoon you meet a young lady, with something bulky under her cloak, that young lady is not unlikely to be Miss Norton, and that

‘something’ a part of the Hollybush Sunday dinner on its way to an invalid. And if you drop into a certain Sabbath school, you will find her either at the harmonium leading the music, or surrounded by eager scholars, whom she is feeding with ‘the finest of the wheat.’

If you chance to be thereabouts at Whitsuntide, you will see hundreds of Sunday-school children in Holly Parks ; and that young lady whose hand holds firmly one hand of each of the two smallest children in that large circle that are bounding round merrily at ‘kiss in the ring’ is Miss Norton. That honest fellow diverting the boys at the swings is Joe Fearnley, and in the centre of that group from which the sweet music is coming, you will find Mary Ann, Joe’s blind sister.

You may sometimes even see Edith rowing Mr. and Mrs. Norton in a blue and white painted boat on the river Ribble ; for although she does lots of mission-work, she knows that to do it well and regularly she must take care of her health, and that there’s nothing like out-of-door exercise for that.

She does not give much money, for she has

little of her own to give; but many people are surprised at the amount of sewing, visiting, and such work which she does, for she keeps up her drawing, her music, and her reading, not only in English, but in the other languages she learned when she was 'Bluebird.'

Miss Auckland, her late governess, is now the wife of the Rev. Mr. Moxon, and the mother of a young family. Her husband's income is small, and Miss Norton had been trying to devise some means whereby she could help them without hurting their feelings, and was going to search her spare wardrobe to see whether there were any of her dresses that could be made down for the little Moxons. Tommie's drawer was in the same room, and Mrs. Norton had just opened it to air the memorials of her first-born, and, as usual, she was crying over them as Edith entered.

Asudden thought passed through Edith's head,—a strange, a new, almost a painful thought,—but it would keep uppermost in her mind, even while she endeavoured to cheer her mamma by telling her about Mrs. Moxon and her young family, and the

more she tried to keep it down, the stronger it became, until at length she said,—

‘Mamma dear, don’t be angry with me, I see that Tommie’s things vex you and make you cry. You know that he is perfectly happy now, and that he would wish you to be happy too; and I think if he were here, he would tell you to convert his little clothes into little “missionaries,” by making some poor mother and some poor child happy with them, —*perhaps it would make you happy too.*’

Mrs. Norton looked earnestly, almost reprovingly at Edith, and said, ‘Edith, Edith, you pain me; I could not part with Tommie’s things; the very thought of such a thing shocks me.’

Edith put her arms gently around her mother’s neck, and asked forgiveness for causing her pain. ‘I did not know that you were here, dear mamma,’ said she sweetly. ‘I came to see if some of my dresses could be made down for the little Moxons, and I am very sorry that I spoke so rashly.’

Edith’s words had, however, entered Mrs. Norton’s heart, and within a week she was the bearer of all Tommie’s things to Mrs. Moxon, who knew them

well, and esteemed them very highly, for she remembered how precious they were in Mrs. Norton's sight.

Before another month had elapsed, little Tommie Moxon had got planted into Mrs. Norton's heart, and had so warmed and blessed it, that she calls him now her 'own dear boy,' and has resolved to be a loving mother to him all her life.

The Rev. Mr. Bamford often says that Miss Norton reminds him of the poet Cowper's lines :

'Graceful and useful all she does,
Blessing and blest where'er she goes.'

And he urges his young friends to carry out in their lives what he calls 'Bluebird's Motto' :

'I live for those that love me,
For those I know love true ;
For the Heaven that smiles above me,
And awaits my spirit too ;
For the cause that lacks assistance,
For the wrong that needs resistance,
For the picture in the distance,
For the good that I can do.'

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